

## OFFERING OF ECO-AGRITOURISM SERVICES AND THEIR PLACE IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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### ABSTRACT

This work describes a proposal to build a tourism facility in the village of Bertotovec (Prešov district, Slovak Republic) to serve for eco-agritourism purposes. The village has an excellent starting position, which offers many opportunities for people from Eastern Slovakia regions as well as from the other places for active or passive recovery in a healthy and pleasant environment. In addition to hospitality services, our main interest deals with the supply of specific services related to increasing awareness of nature and its conservation, which are further described in the article. On this basis, we particularly expect so-called "green customers" to the proposed facility. There are priorities of Saris region as a part of Easter Slovakia, and particularly the village of Bertotovec mentioned to develop and improve the eco-agritourism services, also the pros, cons, opportunities and threats which could meet the project. The paper referred to the project marketing strategy, SWOT analysis, operations management system, etc. In conclusion, the work touches on proposals that should be implemented in order to commence business in the village, focused on eco-agritourism and its active rural development.

**Keywords:** agritourism, rural tourism, tourism, eco-agritourism, tourists, services

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Global trends in tourism are demanded for adventure, excitement, entertainment and education of tourists stayed in the countryside. It is an interesting idea how to spend their holiday or longer weekend. Agritourism is an excellent possibility for people looking for active holidays. Even better alternative, in terms of environmental protection, is to provide eco-agritourism, e.g. agritourism operated on the certified ecofarm (biofarm, organic farm). The primary visitors will be people who want to relax or want to experience it as a new way of life. Their priority is to protect the environment and the entire operation will be based on this main pillar. This region offers beautiful nature, rich cultural heritage and especially people who are glad to provide quality services for tourists.

Therefore, we believe that there will be enough visitors who will choose this way how to spend their free time. These services are offered for people who understand that the biggest problem is that people can not or do not want to get back to the nature, those who live in their comfortable world oversaturated with technology and developments in the modern era. Those people, who did not forget where they sprang up, what is natural for them and want to restore it. Otepka and Habán (2007) defined that agritourism is a business activity, which is provided by the operator (farmer, municipality, region, or individual entrepreneur) for tourists to their rest and recreation in rural areas. It includes specific activities of agri-entrepreneurs according to local farm, economic and natural conditions, aiming to meet the recreational requirements of tourists. Surrounding of countryside or farms is attractive particularly for urban children and every day spent in this surrounding brings them new experiences. Rural tourism can be characterized as a particular form of recreation in rural areas using a variety of possibilities that the environment provides. The rural tourism

services are provided in recreation in the countryside, using spare capacity of the rural home, business, accommodation, catering, sports and entertainment facilities and environment of the country.

Agritourism is an additive action of farm business entity. The additional functions of agriculture helps to preserve the cultural landscape, maintain and restore the population and increase the economic level by extending the market area of agricultural production, regional specialties, crafts, art products, as well as by offering folklore. One of the objectives of agritourism and rural tourism is to protect the environment and typical architecture. It should respect the conservation and hygiene regulations, as well as the architectural character of the landscape and buildings (Mach, 1993). Eco-agritourism is subjected to the conditions of the European Union for the organic farming and produced organic products are offered to visitors for tasting, buying and possibly also in foods. Slovakia has many natural, historical and cultural features for the development of rural tourism and agritourism. It has its beautiful nature, history, number of knowledgeable, creative, industrious and hospitable people. It has a full of a variety of attractions, it can offer visitors a huge amount of experience in its typical regions (Balážová et al.; 2007).

Presov Self-Governing Region is the second largest region in Slovakia, however in the socio-economic terms it is one of the least developed regions of Slovakia. One area that could help the development of this region is an area of tourism. Tourism business can be considered as one of alternative instruments of regional policy aimed at achieving optimum development of the regions. Presov Self-Governing Region is significant in terms of natural tourism potential, rich history and many important cultural monuments, folklore and folk architecture. This potential for tourism is very large but under-exploited. Presov Self-Governing Region has sufficient natural, cultural, historical and social potential for tourism development. It is little used, due to the fact that there is a lack of funds for the reconstruction and operation of many historic monuments, poorly built and the poor state of infrastructure support. The development of existing potential should help implementation of the complex information systems in tourism. The policy of sustainable tourism as a responsible approach to tourism in the long run promotes sustainable regional development at all levels - economic, social and environmental. It ensures the quality of life for present but also for future generations, and also reinforces the principle of partnership in developing and implementing sustainable regional development, building packages, creating new products (Borovský et al.; 2008).

The target of the article is:

- propose the construction of facilities "Rural yard in Berti" aimed at eco-agritourism purposes;
- propose a project for greater range of potential visitors;
- identify strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities and risks arising from project implementation;
- defend the project, his perspective and contribution to the development of eco-agritourism in the region in the future.

## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the development of this work the following methods were used:

- processing of study materials, which are focused on the development of tourism, agritourism and eco-agritourism, the history of the Saris region, Bertotovec village as well as their natural predisposition for tourism;
- gathering information and promotional literature about the region and village;



- SWOT analysis of the project in terms of agritourism, eco-agritourism and overall development of the region;
- consultation of development opportunities of the region in information centers;
- survey the current state of rural tourism development, the state of roads, hiking and biking trails in the area.

Village Bertotovce is located 18 km west of Presov and 13 km south of Sabinov. It directly touches Saris Highlands. In the middle of the village is height above sea level 400 m, but grounds are extending from 372 m - 643 m. Surroundings of the village are deforested. In the near forest, vegetation of pine and spruce stands dominates. Through the middle of the village streams brook "Great Svinka", into which flows the creek Hermanovka from Hermanovce. Northern edge of the village is crossed by the National Road of first class in the direction Presov - Levoca. Bertotovce village belongs to the Presov district and to the Presov Self - Governing Region.

### 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Visitors of the "Rural yard in Berti" are expected from all over Slovakia, but mainly from the surrounding districts. From the foreign clients visitors from Poland, and Hungary should prevail. Our services will be served to above less demanding clientele with regard to prices. This will be especially determined for so-called "green customers" who are demanding in term of the expected environment, ecological approach, nature, rural life and the atmosphere of country life. Their primary motivation will be performance of eco-agritourism. It is considered especially for families with children, groups of young people, students, pensioners, but we are also plan to organize children's camps and biocamps.

Services of our "Rural yard in Berti" will provide various types of accommodation. Fully furnished rooms, opportunity to camp in tents and for the greatest adventurers, there is also the possibility for bivouac on restricted sites of our yard. There will be offered catering services and prepared meals from our own products, preferred will be the vegetarian cuisine. Our customers will have always prepared enough activities. For example, assistance to various agricultural works, demonstrations and workshops of folk crafts and folk traditions, teaching horseback riding, walks in the surrounding countryside, animal welfare, harvesting of medicinal plants, sitting at the bonfire, roasting, grilling, etc.

Prices will be adjusted in view of the diverse use of our farm. Customers who choose camping or bivouac provide discounts. We will also offer discounts for organizing children's camps or biocamps for larger groups of customers. People who will do some work on the farm would get discounts too. We are also receptive to accept volunteers with an interest in organic farming, rural residence. Guests, who will assist works in the appropriate time on the farm, will get accommodation and meals in reward.

Customers will be informed about the newly created "Rural yard in Berti" through the marketing communications, regional travel agencies and so on. For the advertising, main web site of the village will be used, web site of the city Presov and not least, the own web site will be created. As next promotional activities, leaflets will be distributed; promotional brochures created, as well as the participation at exhibitions and trade fairs and place of tourism information guides by the roads. Our principles will be: acceptable price and the maintenance of permanent customer needs, which is the best advertising activity. Rural tourism is a product which uses so-called promotion "from mouth to mouth."

SWOT analysis on the basis of the assessment of the situation within the organization, on the basis of mapping the strengths and weaknesses and on the basis of findings of the

market situation around the company, recognizes the opportunities and threats and sets out a strategy for the future (Madzinová, 2005).

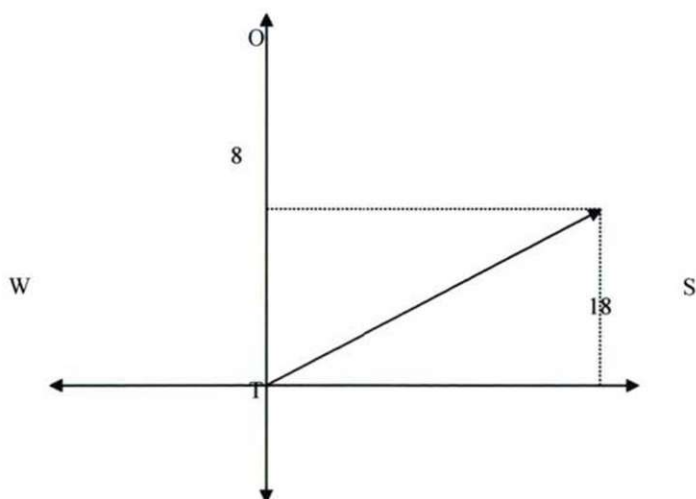
<b>Strengths: S</b>	<b>Score</b>
• pleasant rural environment	4
• systematic approach, enthusiasm and organizational skills of people	5
• originality and style	3
• environment rich in natural beauty and mineral water springs and historical monuments	4
• organic animal husbandry	4
• close contact with livestock	2
• suitable geographical location of the village, the availability of communication	3
• sports and cultural life of the village, interested citizens, the folklore and traditions	5
• the existence of village website	2
• support and interest in community development from municipal authority and the Mayor	3
• low competition in the business of rural tourism, eco-agritourism in the area	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>37</b>

<b>Weaknesses: W</b>	<b>Score</b>
• initial debt of farm	4
• the need for local environmental action	3
• insufficient knowledge of foreign languages	2
• poor publicity of land and its predisposition, lack of advertising and promotional materials	4
• lack of public awareness about the possibilities of small business in the tourism	2
• underexploited tourism potential	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>19</b>

<b>Opportunities: O</b>	<b>Score</b>
• better use of natural conditions and cultural heritage of the region	5
• possibility for getting experiences from the other farms	4
• employ residents of the village, providing jobs to local entrepreneurs	3
• the possibility of organization of ecological days for children and adults	5

• establish an information center where will be possible to buy postcards, souvenirs and get information materials and maps of the area and its surroundings	4
• return of people to nature, to the traditions, healthy water and food, to the activities of our grandfathers and grandmothers	6
• the use of support programs for developing rural tourism and agritourism	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>Threats: T</b>	<b>Score</b>
• ungovernableness of all necessary conditions and requirements for the success of farm in time	2
• unwillingness of people to work	3
• unresolved proprietary business ownership	4
• the possibility of natural environment pollution, felling forests, creating wildlife dump	3
• the promotion of another region by Presov Self-Governing Region	3
• state budget and economic situation in the country	4
• problem with the investment (capital)	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>23</b>



*Figure 1: Results of SWOT analysis.*



#### 4. CONCLUSION

Bertotovec village has good predispositions to develop eco-agritourism. However, for the implementation of this business plan, as it is in all similar projects, the systematic approach, determination and courage are necessary. The aim of this study was to evaluate all options, negatives and positives, which implies this. The stay of tourists will provide in particular an unforgettable experience, gain new experience, knowledge of ecology, botany, zoology, speleology. Tourists have learned the traditional folk crafts, will be in direct contact with livestock, will have the opportunity to ride a horse or ride in a carriage, enjoying the taste of traditional local delicacies and food and environmental friendly foods. Visitors will meet with sincere willingness, kindness and natural respect for the customer. Our primary concern for us is that the most people will be connected with nature, they rest from the "normal" busy life in the city, to forget their problems and leave visitors full of new strength and mental harmony, with the feeling that they want to return, what we warmly welcome.

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